

***Friends Meeting House, Harrow***

*456 Rayners Lane, Pinner, London, HA5 5DT*

*National Grid Reference: TQ 12956 87924*



***Statement of Significance***

***An interwar Arts and Crafts design by Hubert Lidbetter, with furnishings from Brynmawr. The meeting house is of local architectural and historical interest, and is of overall medium significance.***

***Evidential value***

***The meeting house retains much of its original fabric and character, and is of medium evidential value.***

***Historical value***

***The meeting house was built in 1935, and belongs to the interwar suburban development of Pinner. Its primary historical interest is in the furnishings from Brynmawr and as a design by Hubert Lidbetter, a significant Quaker architect. It is of medium historical value.***

***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house is an attractive Arts and Crafts design, retaining many external and internal features of note, including furnishings from the Brynmawr craft workshops. The domestic style fits well in the local context. The building is of high aesthetic value.***

### **Communal value**

***The meeting house is used by local groups, but the use of one of the rooms is constrained. It is of medium communal value.***

#### **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *London West*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0003250*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Harrow*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Harrow NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *No*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1935; 1962*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Hubert Lidbetter*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *21 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Sandra Horsfall*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 403-4

Local Meeting Survey, by Sandra Horsfall, June 2015

Website, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brynmawr\\_Experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brynmawr_Experiment)

#### **Part 2: The Meeting House & Burial Ground: history, contents, use, setting and designation**

##### **2.1 Historical background**

Quakers met in various places in Harrow until 1934 when a plot of land in a part of Pinner then being developed for housing was acquired for £320. The 'small, neat meeting house' (Butler) was built in 1935 from designs by Hubert Lidbetter and the cost (with furnishings) was £1,744. The benches were reportedly made at Brynmawr, South Wales, a Quaker initiative of the years of the Great Depression (the Brynmawr Experiment), whereby, in the spirit of Arts and Crafts and Quaker ideals, workshops were established to give useful and creative work for the local unemployed.

In 1962 Lidbetter designed a small classroom and kitchen extension (cost £3,000). This was named The Marlborough Room, having been built with the proceeds of the sale of the Wealdstone premises of the Marlborough Mission, which had been established to help local families in the years of the Great Depression. Further minor improvements took place in 2004, including adaptation of WCs for disabled access (architects Taylor Williams Daley Partnership, London SW11).

## 2.2 The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

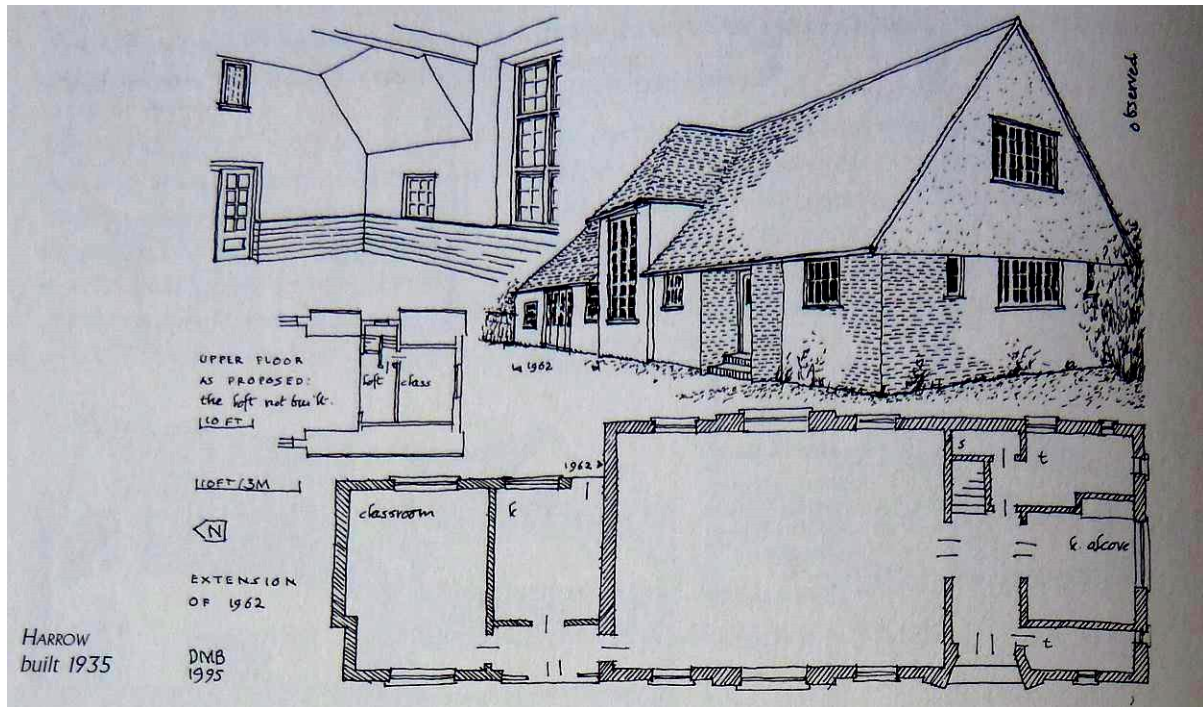


Figure 1: Ground floor plan, internal and external views (from Butler Vol. 1, p.404)

The meeting house was built in 1935 from designs by Hubert Lidbetter, who also designed a small extension to the north in 1962. It is in a domestic Arts and Crafts style, blending well with the interwar suburban setting. It is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond, with a steep tile roof and low eaves. The gable ends are rendered (that to the north largely obscured by the later addition, which is in matching materials). Raised central bays to front and rear each have a hipped roof and contain a large mullion and transom window, of nine lights each further subdivided into nine panes, the principal source of natural light for the meeting room. On either side, smaller windows are tucked under low eaves. Opening lights are metal casements.

The entrance leads into a hall area with WCs and offices to the right and a stair to an upper classroom ahead. All the doors are of oak. The main meeting room leads off to the left. This is an attractive rectangular space, lit by large windows front and back. The floor is of woodblock, and there is a horizontal boarded timber dado around the perimeter. Otherwise the walls are plastered up to the high ceiling, which is plastered under the collars. There is no ministers' platform or fixed seating. High in the wall on the south side is a shuttered opening containing a leaded casement window looking down to the meeting room from the upper classroom (figure 2). There is a second classroom and a kitchen in the 1962 addition.



Figure 2: Window opening from upper classroom to meeting room

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

The benches were made at Brynmawr, South Wales (information from local Meeting). These and a bookcase and table are contemporary with the meeting house.

### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable.

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house lies within an area of interwar suburban housing development, such as characterises much of this part of northwest London. There is a small garden at the front, while the back of the meeting house is fairly tight up against the site boundary. Next door is a preparatory school.

### 2.6 Listed status

Not listed. The building is of some local architectural and historical interest, and while probably not meriting statutory listed status, would certainly merit consideration for inclusion in Harrow Council's local list.

### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

Low.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

### 3.2 Maintenance

A QIR was prepared in 2013 but has not been seen by the writer. Its recommendations had not yet been implemented in June 2015. The building appears to be well maintained.

### 3.3 Sustainability

Energy saving measures carried out include loft insulation and the installation of secondary glazing. The meeting house is five minutes' walk from Rayners Lane Tube Station, with several buses going to the station all week. There is a small car park, but no bicycle rack.

### 3.4 Amenities

These include a meeting room, kitchen, WCs, library/office. An upstairs room (former children's room) cannot be used except for storage because of inadequate means of escape/fire regulations.

### 3.5 Access

The meeting has not conducted a Disability Access Audit. There is a step at the main entrance, but a permanent ramp is installed at the north entrance. There is level circulation around the interior (ground floor), and an accessible WC and hearing loop are provided.

### 3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about eight hours each week. Other groups use the two rooms for about seventy of a possible 140 hours. The meeting has a lettings policy, and hirings have to be of educational or social benefit. No private parties or political parties are allowed. Users cite the quiet and peaceful quality of the spaces, and the reasonable price.

### 3.7 Vulnerability to crime

There was a spate of burglaries from the nursery but these ceased once valuables were not kept in the building. Generally crime is not seen as a problem; the area is generally well cared for, with low levels of deprivation.

### 3.8 Plans for change

None.

## **Part 4: Impact of Change**

### 4.1 To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

*i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting:* The meeting house is said to contain all the facilities needed by Friends. Any changes should seek to retain the historic character, fittings and furnishings. Use of the upper schoolroom is currently not possible, and passive fire protection measures might be undertaken to address this issue.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* The meeting already lends itself well to wider community use. Again, measures to make the upper room useable would increase both community use and income.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* The building is of some local architectural and historical interest, and in the event of its being laid down it would be desirable for a suitable alternative use to be found. Given the character of the area and the building, this would most probably be a residential use.

**Part 5: Category: 3**